



DENTAL CARE FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

STORY IDEAS

A count down to dental health! Six steps can put your child in the 50% of school children who have never had a cavity:

- ◆ Good home dental care
- ◆ Fluorides
- ◆ Sealants
- ◆ Limited snacking
- ◆ Mouth protection for sports
- ◆ Regular visits to a pediatric dentist.

▲ Children miss more than 750,000 school days each year as a result of dental problems and related conditions. Children in dental pain are distracted from their studies and even their friends. Children with healthy teeth have better attendance and are more attentive in school. Here is how preventive dentistry can keep your child's smile healthy and attractive.

▲ Preventive dentistry means a healthy smile for your child. Children with healthy mouths have a better chance of general health, because disease in the mouth can endanger the rest of the body. They can chew more easily and gain more nutrients from the foods they eat. A healthy mouth is more attractive, giving children confidence in their appearance. Finally, preventive dentistry means less extensive and less expensive treatment for your child.

CURRENT FACTS

- ▲ One in 10 children aged 5 to 11 has never had the chance to visit a dentist.
- ▲ Tooth decay is still the major cause of tooth loss in children.
- ▲ Half of U.S. school children have no decay in permanent teeth.
- ▲ According to the National Caries Prevalence Survey, 92% of children aged 8 to 18 have mild to moderate gum inflammation.
- ▲ 90% of all cavities are preventable.
- ▲ According to research from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the average tooth brings in from \$1 to \$2 from the Tooth Fairy, although dentists around the country report that some children get as much as \$20 a tooth.
- ▲ Rituals from other countries when a baby tooth is lost include tossing the tooth over a roof, throwing the tooth to the sun, and leaving it to be collected by a small mouse.

PREVENTIVE STEP 1: GOOD HOME CARE

- ▲ Supervise your child's brushing and flossing. A 1996 survey showed that one-third of parents allow their children to brush and floss unsupervised.
- ▲ The best times to brush are after breakfast and before bed.

- ▲ The best toothbrushes have soft, round-ended (polished) bristles that clean while being gentle on the gums.
- ▲ Select a fluoride toothpaste accepted by the American Dental Association.
- ▲ Encourage your child to floss at least once a day.
- ▲ Supervise your child's flossing until age 10.
- ▲ Snack in moderation, no more than three or four times a day. Snacks should contribute to the overall nutrition and health of the child. Cheese, vegetables and yogurt are all nutritious snacks.

PREVENTIVE STEP 2: FLUORIDES

- ▲ Fluoride not only helps prevent tooth decay, but can also cure cavities in their early stages. A healed cavity is stronger than the original tooth surface.
- ▲ Water fluoridation is still the No. 1 way to prevent tooth decay. However, over 40% of children do not have access to fluoridated water.
- ▲ If a child does not have access to adequately fluoridated water, a pediatric dentist can advise parents about other sources of fluoride, such as fluoride supplements, fluoride treatments, fluoridated toothpastes, and fluoride mouthrinses.

A pea-sized amount of toothpaste on the brush is plenty for fluoride protection. Children should spit out, not swallow, the toothpaste after brushing.

PREVENTIVE STEP 3: SEALANTS

- ▲ Most cavities occur in places that sealants could have protected. Four out of five cavities in children under age 12 occur on the biting surfaces of the back teeth.
- ▲ Children with just a single application of sealants on their back teeth had 50% less tooth decay and tooth restorations after 15 years than children without sealants.
- ▲ A 1995 ADA survey showed that sealants cost about less than half of what a filling costs; a good buy in view of the valuable decay protection it provides.
- ▲ The teeth most at risk of decay and therefore most in need of sealants are the six-year and twelve-year molars.

PREVENTIVE STEP 4: MOUTH PROTECTORS IN SPORTS

- ▲ More than 200,000 injuries are prevented each year by wearing mouth protectors.
- ▲ A mouthguard not only protects the teeth but may reduce the force of blows that can cause concussions, neck injuries and jaw fractures. A child should wear a mouth protector while participating in any activity with a risk of falls or of head contact with other players or equipment. This includes football, baseball, basketball, soccer, hockey, skateboarding and even gymnastics.



PREVENTIVE STEP 5: REGULAR DENTAL VISITS

- ▲ Regular dental visits help children stay cavity-free. Teeth cleanings remove plaque build-up on the teeth. Plaque irritates the gums and causes decay.
- ▲ Fluoride treatment renews the fluoride content in the enamel, strengthening teeth and preventing cavities.
- ▲ It is essential to get an on-going assessment of changes in a child's oral health by a pediatric dentist. For example, a child may need additional fluoride, dietary changes, sealants, or preventive orthodontics for ideal dental health.

SPIT TOBACCO ENDANGERS MORE THAN TWO MILLION KIDS

- ▲ Children, both girls and boys, make up an estimated one quarter of the 10 million Americans who use spit tobacco. Spit tobacco can cause gum disease, tooth loss and oral cancer.
- ▲ Long-term snuff users have a 50% greater risk of oral cancer than nonusers.

GREAT QUOTES

"Thanks to fluoride, improved dental techniques, and oral care products, better hygiene and nutrition and greater public awareness, it's entirely possible to eliminate cavities in the next generation."

Dr. Marvin H. Berman, pediatric dentist, Chicago, Ill.

"If children's teeth are in shape, they will perform better in a classroom. Without healthy teeth, students might be in pain from cavities, which could distract them from their studies."

Dr. W. Ed Gonzalez, pediatric dentist, Brandon, Fla.

VISUAL POSSIBILITIES

Visit a pediatric dental office for a tour. You may find children singing songs, playing video games or being treated in child-sized dental equipment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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